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FM AMEMBASSY MOGADISHU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1242

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOGADISHU 11138

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PREL PINR PGOV SO
SUBJ: NORTHERN MINISTER DEPLORES CURRENT SITUATION

REF: Q MOGADISHU 08622; B) MOGADISHU 10999
- C) MOGADISHU 10793

¶11. (C) ENTIRE TEXT.

¶12. SUMMARY: ANOTHER OF THE YOUNGER MEMBERS OF THE CABINET HOLDS THE PRESIDENT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE COUNTRY'S MALAISE. END SUMMARY.

¶13. INTRODUCTION: OVER LUNCH DECEMBER 19, ABDIRAHMAN JAMA MOHAMED, MINISTER OF LIVESTOCK, FORESTRY AND RANGE, IDENTIFIED PRESIDENT SIAD BARRE AS THE PRINCIPAL STUMBLING BLOCK TO PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF SOMALIA'S MOUNTING POLITICAL TURMOIL. AN ISSAK FROM HARGESIA, THE YOUTHFUL MINISTER WARMLY BUT PRIVATELY ENDORSED FORMER PRIME MINISTER MOHAMMED EGAL'S PUBLIC CALL THIS WEEK FOR SIAD'S RESIGNATION. ABDIRAHMAN SAID HE FOUND EGAL'S PROPOSED SUCCESSION SCENARIO QUITE REASONABLE. HOWEVER, WHEN ASKED IF HE THOUGHT SIAD BARRE WOULD AGREE TO STEP DOWN, ABDIRAHMAN SHOOK HIS HEAD SLOWLY AND SADLY. ASKED WHAT PROCEDURE CURRENTLY EXISTS FOR PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF OUTSTANDING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE REGIME AND THE REBELS, THE MINISTER SAID SOURCES WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT STATE THAT THE CAIRO ROUNDTABLE HAS BEEN RESCHEDULED FOR MID-JANUARY. I THEN BRIEFED HIM ON MY DISCUSSION WITH THE EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR, WHO TOLD ME THAT NO NEW DATE HAS BEEN SET FOR THE PUTATIVE TALKS IN THE EGYPTIAN CAPITAL.

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¶14. CAIRO CONFERENCE: IN DISCUSSING THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE MEETING IN CAIRO, THE MINISTER SAID THE ORDERS TO ARREST THE MANIFESTO GROUP MEMBERS CAME DIRECTLY FROM SIAD. HE WAS ANGRY WHEN HE DISCOVERED THEY INTENDED TO CONSULT WITH THE SNM IN LONDON EN ROUTE TO CAIRO. WHEN IT WAS POINTED OUT THAT REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TWO GROUPS CERTAINLY WOULD HAVE MET IN CAIRO AND THAT SENIOR GSDF OFFICIALS ROUTINELY CONTACT SENIOR SNM OFFICIALS WHEN IN LONDON, ABDIRAHMAN SMILED WEAKLY.

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¶15. VIOLENCE: IN AN EXCHANGE ON THE VIOLENCE WHICH HAS PROMPTED THE EVACUATION OF SO MANY FOREIGN ASSISTANCE PERSONNEL, THE MINISTER BLAMED THE SOMALI MILITARY FOR THE ONGOING MURDERS AND ROBBERIES. HE OPINED THAT THE DETACHMENT RESPONSIBLE FOR SIAD'S PROTECTION, NOW COMPOSED SOLELY OF MAREHAN TRIBE MEMBERS, SEES THE END OF THE REGIME AND THEIR OWN PROTECTED STATUS COMING. CONSEQUENTLY, THEY ARE TRYING TO BUILD UP PERSONAL FINANCIAL RESERVES BY CRIMINAL ACTIVITY. HE CLAIMED THAT EVEN SIAD BARRE HAS HAD PERSONAL VEHICLES STOLEN BY SOLDIERS ASSIGNED TO GUARD HIM. THE MINISTER SUBSEQUENTLY REQUESTED MY ASSISTANCE OBTAINING VISAS FOR YOUNG RELATIVES HE WANTED TO HELP LEAVE SOMALIA TO AVOID BOTH VIOLENCE AND BEING IMPRESSED INTO THE SOMALI NATIONAL ARMY.

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¶16. AID SUSPENSION: ABDIRAHMAN TOOK THE OCCASION TO WARN ME THAT MANY SENIOR MEMBERS OF GOVERNMENT HOLD ME PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SUSPENSION OF AMERICAN ASSISTANCE, WHICH THEY CONSIDER AN OVER-REACTION TO THE ONGOING VIOLENCE. HIS ACCOUNT WAS SIMILAR TO THAT GIVEN ME A FEW DAYS EARLIER BY THE MINISTER OF MINERAL RESOURCES (REFTEL C). HE ADVISED ME TO SEE THE PRIME MINISTER TO TRY TO CLEAR THE AIR.

17. NATIONAL PROSPECTS: THE MINISTER'S DOWNBEAT ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT SCENE GAVE RISE TO EVIDENT PESSIMISM ABOUT SOMALIA'S FUTURE. HE RULED OUT FEDERALISM AS INCONSISTENT WITH SOMALIA'S POVERTY, FACTIONALISM AND THE NOMADIC LIFESTYLE OF MOST OF ITS PEOPLE. BUT HE RELENTED WHEN IT WAS NOTED THAT FEDERALISM COULD MEAN NO MORE THAN TWO FEDERATED POLITICAL UNITS. HE HAD PRESUMED IT MUST ENTAIL THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ELABORATE GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES IN EACH OF THE COUNTRY'S 20 REGIONS. HE DID STATE HIS BELIEF THAT BOTH THE PRIME MINISTER AND FINANCE MINISTER JAMA BARRE HAVE NATIONAL INTERESTS AT HEART, AND HE URGED THAT I WORK CLOSELY WITH THEM.

18. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: IN REVIEWING WHAT DIVIDES SOMALIS, THE MINISTER FOCUSED ON THE DIFFERENT VALUE SYSTEMS TO WHICH SOMALIS WERE EXPOSED IN BRITISH AND ITALIAN ADMINISTERED SOMALIA. NORTHERNERS FIND IT IRKSOME, HE UNDERLINED, TO HAVE TO DEAL WITH SOUTHERNERS, BECAUSE THEY APE THE ITALIANS' CORRUPTION, INCOMPETENCE, AND TOLERANCE FOR SHODDY WORK.

BISHOP